

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 05778 030946Z

12

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5684

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5778

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJ: CATHOLICS SEEK TO KEEP ISSUE OF BISHOP CHI ALIVE

1. CATHOLIC SOURCES INFORMED EMBASSY THAT OVER WEEKEND SPECIAL MASSES FOR BISHOP CHI HAK-SON WERE HELD IN INCHON AND TAEGU. INCHON MASS WAS CONDUCTED BY AMERICAN BISHOP MC NAUGHTON. IN BOTH CASES, THOSE ATTENDING WERE MOSTLY CLERGYMEN AND NUNS. FOLLOWING MASS PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED TO STAY ON AND DISCUSS QUESTION OF CHRISTIAN OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT BISHOP CHI AGAINST GOVT. YOUNGER SOCIAL ACTION MINDED PRIESTS ARE SAID TO RESENT PROLONGED PERIOD OF WAITING FOR ROKG ACTION TO FREE PRISONERS AND FEAR THAT BISHOP AND HIS CAUSE WILL BE FORGOTTEN OR ABANDONED IF

CHURCH DOES NOT ACT SOON.

2. A GROUP OF 50 CATHOLIC PRIESTS MET IN INCHON AUG 26 AND ISSUED A STRONG THREE-POINT STATEMENT WHICH:

1. SUPPORTED BISHOP CHI'S "DECLARATION OF CONSCIENCE" OF JULY 23 AT MYONGDONG CATHEDRAL;

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 05778 030946Z

2. DEMANDED IMMEDIATE LIFTING OF EMERGENCY MEASURE

NO. 2 AND THE RELEASE OF BISHOP CHI, OTHER CHURCHMEN,
PROFESSORS, LAWYERS AND STUDENTS; AND

3. PLEDGED TO ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT OF THE KOREAN
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND
TO SEEK THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS.
APPENDED TO LEAFLET WERE STATEMENT BY BISHOP CHI, AND
SPEECHES BEFORE EMERGENCY COURT-MARTIAL BY EX-PRES
YUN PO SUN AND REV. PARK HYONG KYU.

3. IN LINE WITH ABOVE, ACTING NUNCIO KABONGO KANUNDOWE
TOLD EMBASSY POL COUNS OF VATICAN CONCERN OVER FATE OF BISHOP
CHI WHO HAS REMAINED INACCESSIBLE TO CHURCH LEADERS.
FATHER KABONGO ALSO NOTED
GROWING RESTIVENESS AMONG YOUNGER KOREAN PRIESTS
WHO FEEL THAT CHURCH SHOULD BREAK SILENCE ON BISHOP CHI
CASE AND NOT WAIT PASSIVELY FOR ROKG TO ACT. FATHER KABONGO
INDICATED THAT ONE REASON THE PRIESTS' FRUSTRATION IS
DIRECTED AT THE VATICAN AND THE NUNCIATURE WAS BECAUSE
OF THEIR ERRONEOUS
BELIEF THAT THE VATICAN IS UNINTERESTED IN BISHOP CHI
AND IN THE CHURCH-STATE TENSIONS IN THE ROK.
FATHER KABONGO SAID HE BELIEVES THAT, UNLESS THERE IS
SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT, IT ONLY A MATTER OF TIME
BEFORE SOME OF THE YOUNGER RELIGIOUS BEGIN PUBLIC
DEMONSTRATIONS IN SUPPORT OF BISHOP CHI.
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